



## Feeling Sleepy?

"I have to be dragged out of bed," says Paul, 9. "It would take 20 alarm clocks to get me up."

Paul is not alone. Mara, 8, says her dad drags her out of bed, too. In fact, when we talked to kids, we discovered that the one thing you hate more than going to bed is getting up in the morning.

The reason: You need more sleep! The kids we surveyed get anywhere from 45 to 75 minutes too little sleep each night.

### Zombie Zone

Missing Z's can create big problems. "When I'm sleepy, I can't do much," says Rosalie, 9. "I walk with my eyelids drooping."

Scientists aren't exactly sure why sleep is so important. Many think sleep helps our muscles repair themselves and gives our brains time to store "data" received during the day. Sleep may also help us fight disease. (That could explain why having a cold makes you feel like snoozing all day.)

One thing is certain. "Not getting enough sleep affects every part of your life," says Dr. Mary Carskadon, a scientist who studies snoozers. Sleepy kids have difficulty concentrating on school, friends-even on baseballs zooming past their noses.

### Drooping Grades

"Sometimes during school, I put my head on my desk and drift off," says Elizabeth, 11. Desktop catnaps might make you feel better. But they might also show up on your report card. According to Dr. Carskadon's research, kids who earn mainly A's and B's go to bed earlier than those who get D's and F's. In one study, kids who got bad grades slept about 35 minutes less each night than their honor-roll classmates.

### Friendship Fumbles

Losing sleep may also mean losing friends. Why? Because sleep may help kids control their emotions, says sleep researcher Carol Leotta. Lack of slumber can lead to more fights with friends, family, teachers, and others.

### Sports Strikeout

If you want to be a high scorer on your basketball team, you can forget catching the "Late Show." Dr. Carskadon says, "Not getting enough sleep slows your **reaction time**." That's how long it takes you to respond to something in your environment, like an opening on the court or a clear shot for the basket. To speed up your reactions and improve your game, take a tip from the pros: Go to bed early the night before the game.

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### **Double Whammy**

But the kids we talked to say it's not that easy. After-school sports practices, TV, and loads of homework make it tough to get to bed on time. "And when I spend the night at a friend's, we usually stay up until about 2 A.M.," added Pat.

These "social" reasons for staying awake are only half the problem, says Dr. Carskadon. Her research shows that as your body matures, your brain waits until later at night to release a chemical that makes you sleepy. In other words, it's natural for teens and almost-teens to crawl into bed and fall asleep later.

### **Pulling the Plug**

Staying up later would be no big deal if you could wake up later, too. You'd just be resetting your internal "clock" (the part of your brain that controls your body's functions) to run on a later schedule. But if you drag yourself out of bed for an early-morning soccer game or to catch the school bus, you can expect to feel like a zombie.

That's because all sleep is not equal. The last hour of sleep, like the highest level on a video game, is worth more. But getting to that high level requires sleeping through all the lower levels first. Waking up too soon is like pulling the plug in the middle of the game.

### **Sleep Solutions**

One way to make sure you get enough sleep is to stick to a regular schedule. It will be easier to fall asleep - and get up - if you go to bed at the same time every night.

Elizabeth tried to end her school-day snoozes by going to bed earlier-at 8:30 instead of 9:45. The change wasn't an immediate success, however. "Last night, I was in bed by 8:30," she reported. "But I finally got to sleep at about 11 o'clock."

If you want to reset your bedtime, Dr. Carskadon says, you need to be patient. Your internal clock is easy to set to a later sleep time - but readjusting to an earlier schedule is more challenging. For the best results, try moving your bedtime 15 minutes earlier each night.

Soothing music may also help. Max, 12, puts on a CD and says, "I'm usually asleep halfway through." Scientists also say to avoid exercise right before bed. And stay away from sugary foods; the energy boost might make you think you're not tired.

Afternoon naps can also help you feel well rested. Just make sure you don't nap too close to bedtime. That can make falling asleep at night harder.

The good news: You won't always need as much sleep as you do now. Most adults would be happy with an eight-hour snooze. So enjoy your Z's while you can!

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**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read the passage “Feeling Sleepy”, then circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. What is one suggestion that Dr. Carskadon gives to help you set your internal clock to an earlier schedule?
  - A. Wake up 15 minutes later each morning.
  - B. Go to bed 15 minutes earlier each night.
  - C. Go to bed by 8:30 PM every night.
  - D. Stay up later and later each night.
  
2. What is the main idea of this article?
  - A. Desktop catnaps at school might make you feel better.
  - B. Getting enough sleep may help you fight disease.
  - C. Kids get 45 to 75 minutes too little sleep each night.
  - D. Not getting enough sleep affects every part of your life.
  
3. If the article “Feeling Sleepy?” needed a new title, which would be BEST?
  - A. “Desktop Catnaps”
  - B. “Afternoon Naps”
  - C. “Losing Sleep”
  - D. “Alarm Clocks”
  
4. What happens AFTER you stick to a regular sleep schedule?
  - A. You will need a nap.
  - B. You will feel rested.
  - C. You will need more sleep.
  - D. You will feel like a zombie.
  
5. What tip does Dr. Carskadon offer sports players for the night before a game?
  - A. Go to bed early.
  - B. Avoid sugary foods.
  - C. Exercise before bed.
  - D. Play soothing music.

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**Answer Key – Feeling Sleepy**

LA.A.2.2.1: The student identifies the following from a passage: main idea or essential message, relevant supporting details and facts, and/or chronological order or other sequence of events.

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